

WILCOX COUNTY

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Rev. Paul
Anthony Rutledge
Ethel Salter

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Early Care and Education (school readiness)
2. Parental Education and Training
3. Economic Security

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county.

Health - Children's (0 - 19)

physical and mental well-being in the county.

Pregnancy prevention

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Abstinence based programs for grades 6-12
- Public awareness campaign for early pregnancy prevention (i.e. abstinence)
- Classes divided by gender to address pregnancy prevention issues

Substance abuse prevention

Policy Council Action Steps:

- applied for grant from ADECA/Mental health
- seek intervention programs for those already engaged in use of illegal substances
- raise awareness of the health issues surrounding alcohol and substance abuse

General health issues for children

Policy Council Action Steps:

- prevent learning disability through testing and early interventions in reference to vision and hearing- identify testing procedures in place and find sources where needs are not met
- address the issue of child obesity: Provide nutrition education through programs already in place
 - a. address the issue of obesity through the rec. program
 - b. encourage community centers to provide area programs that address obesity among children with parents present
- to identify and utilize transportation resources
- seek funding for the county's county-wide One Stop Youth Development Centers

Safety - Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Fear of violence in the Schools and at home

Policy Council Action Steps:

- advocate for peer mediation at schools
- advocate for and encourage a "parental hall patrol group" with parent hall monitors and anonymous peer monitors
- anger management intervention and awareness-encourage participation in Cahaba Mental Health's 6 week course
- will work collaboratively with the title 1 program for conflict resolution youth programs and peer mediation for juvenile court
- continue to host youth violence prevention week long campaign

Countywide recreation-youth need options for positive energy outlets

Policy Council Action Steps:

- open lines of communication for the Boys & Girls club of Thomasville, or seek funding for a club in county
- continue to support the efforts of the SADD and ACATA programs for the high school
- support the efforts of the baseball Dixie youth program
- advocate for recreational programs by requesting the county commission to restore the 1-mil tax previous earmarked for recreation
- seek sponsors to fund youth violence prevention weeklong campaign
- collaborate to sponsor child abuse prevention campaign during the month of April

Education - Children

learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Students cannot read/write at grade level, including lack of parental involvement; students are being promoted to the next grade without being able to adequately complete coursework of current grade

Policy Council Action Steps:

- work with board of education to solicit funds to place a social worker in each school
- encourage parent participation in parent teacher organization (PTO)
- form a partnership with the churches to encourage parents to become involved in the school life of their children

Lack of preparedness by a number of students for the exit exam and ACT/SAT tests

Policy Council Action Steps:

- seek funding for preparatory classes for the high school exit exam and the ACT and SAT tests
- work in collaboration with the school to ensure that students are receiving tutoring for these tests

Early Care and

Education - Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Lack of readiness of children to begin school studies

Policy Council Action Steps:

- seek funding for Early Start, Even Start and enlarged Head Start programs
- seek funding for extended day programs
- advocate for Head Start programs through out the county, through the board of education
- include early childcare & education program within One Stop Youth Development Centers

Countywide day care centers

Policy Council Action Steps:

- encourage faith based organizations and churches to develop daycare centers within their churches or organizations
- advocate through local bodies of government for the establishment of a countywide daycare center
- advocate and seek funding for permanent housing for youth to have a place to stay, be safe, and feel nurtured

Economic Security

- Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Availability of jobs

Policy Council Action Steps:

- make information of job announcements available to the public
- collaborate with Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission to provide transportation for citizens to work in other areas
- establish stability and consistency with the employment service agency
- encourage small business development and expansion

Job training/preparation

Policy Council Action Steps:

- continue to support efforts of the summer employment program for youth
- training sessions and seminars with public speakers to address basic workforce issues (i.e. attire, professionalism, leadership skills, etc.)
- find out what industries are looking for, and provide this type of training and make this information available to the public
- establish stability and consistency with the Career One-Stop Center
- work in collaboration with the Career Tech program at the high school
- encourage job corps entry and completion of GED

Parent Involvement and Skills

- Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Lack of parenting skills

Policy Council Action Steps:

- refer parents to Cahaba Mental Health for parenting classes
- once established, parenting classes will be available at the One Stop Youth development center to assist parents in obtaining better parenting skills
- presently, will work with current operating development centers to provide parenting skills classes, possibly in conjunction with the Cahaba Mental Health agency

Lack of parental involvement in child's life

Policy Council Action Steps:

- promote and encourage parental involvement through school and church-oriented programs
- host workshops on teaching and educating parents on how to become active and involved in children's lives

Policy Recommendation

1. Implement programs to address these issues for youth at an earlier age, probably at the onset of puberty. Continue to support and allocate funding for programs that address (through education and media awareness type programs) these issues presently. (Health)
2. Allocate funding for programs that will address these issues. (Safety)
3. Terminate the required Alabama's high school graduation exam in public schools. It is unfair that public school students are required to take this test when their private school counterparts do not. (Education)
4. Advocate for and allocate funding for programs designated as early education and head start programs. (Early Care and Education)
5. Allocate funding for programs that will revisit and revitalize the concepts of the old JTPA and CETA programs. (Economic Security)
6. In order for families to access certain state benefits, stipulate that parental involvement is necessary and mandated. For example, in the case of a child who of school age and is receiving state benefits (i.e.-TANF), stipulate that the parents of said child are required to attend at least three programs, events or functions involving the child, and provide verification of such to case worker. (Parent Involvement and Skills).

Accomplishments

1. Our Council meets monthly and has drafted numerous proposals, some funded others not.
2. Received funding from the Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and two (2) summits, for teen age males, to inform them of their responsibility in the teen pregnancy, the child support responsibility, and life as a teen father.
3. Received funding from the Children's First Trust Fund- Child abuse prevention.
4. Working to return the Medicaid Office to Wilcox County.
5. Communicates monthly with the Counties' 101 churches.
6. Submitted proposal to fund permanent housing for youth and the elderly.
7. Our 501 (c) 3 organization "The Wilcox Children's Fund," has been in existence for three years.
8. Worked with Dr. David Stephens, Certified Marriage Counselor, to provide Marriage Success School for our parents.

